

four

quarters

- A Crow and a Dove • Page 1
A Vignette by Martin McMurtrey, S.M.
- The Man Who Stalked People • Page 6
A Short Story by William Sayres
- Monte Cassino: 17 November 1944 • Page 10
A Poem by John William Corrington
- Symposium on the Role of Art in Life — II • Page 12
Introduction by the Editors
- Aesthetic Value in Common Life • Page 12
An Article by Bertram Jessup
 - Nine Demands for a Systematic Theory of Literature • Page 18
An Article by Bruce Olsen
- The Inheritance • Page 27
A Short Story by H. F. Francis
- Man's Love • Page 32
A Short Story by B. M. Steigman
- The Eagle • Page 40
A Poem by Gerald Barrax

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A Crow and A Dove

● Martin McMurtrey, S.M.

The sportsman of the mushroom clan is the morel. Tree mushrooms and the pink-bottom fan mushrooms don't know how to hide. It's child's play to hunt them. Not so the morel. They are a fitting game for any man and can drive him wild. My brother, Gene, and I hunt red squirrels as a team when we haven't had a fight lately. We chase the cottontails together from the thick clover. But the big yellow sponge mushrooms we hunt singly. We're sneaky; we trail each other to spots; we steal each other's hunting ground; and we argue more than usual. The yellow morel can make me hate my own brother.

For the big yellow is the prince, even of the morels. The little red tops can be found in our orchard among the Johnson grass. But I can gather a hundred of them and they won't cover a good-sized steak. The medium browns demand searching, but they can be found with ease along pathways in the woods. They seldom grow over two inches. Not the big yellow! He is a giant. And he knows how to hide. He is a yellow rock or a dead leaf. He crawls beneath the broken bark of a log or peeks from under sheets of May apples. He is the sneakiest master of camouflage in the mushroom kingdom, and the ferns love to hide him. One morning he is not there, search how I will. Next morning comes a warm rain and he's big as my fist.

He comes around only about one week to ten days in spring, and some

dry springs not at all. He has clever allies who distract me from his favorite hiding places. Bright colors catch my eye as the bleeding heart, jack-in-the-pulpit, and blood root hide him. The quails whistle from the tops of stumps, and the ring-necked pheasant struts across the path just to make me dream of something else. The dogwood and the Judas trees blossom on high teasing me to look up instead of down.

But my brother and I love the big yellow, and hunting him is half the fun of springtime. This is one of the few points we agree on about hunting mushrooms—that nothing compares to it.

I love the bluff morel, because he is taller, wilder, and scarcer, and his taste is something not found in the watery bottom sponges did they try a thousand years to match him. There's all the difference between bluff honey stolen from some wild bee tree and bottom honey cooking in the orchard sun. But Gene can't see this difference. He loves the bottom morel that grows fat along some marsh among cattails and matted watergrass. But neither of us is unwilling to steal the other's hunting grounds either in bluffs or bottoms.

Hunting the big yellow is not hard enough. We add to it the challenge of hunting each other. We weigh and compare our daily find; we match our tallest ones, but we rarely hunt together. We add the difficulties of trailing each other to the game of hunting mushrooms. I mistrust Gene's

every move, while he suspects me openly.

I think the trouble started over our different theories, though neither of us cares now except to maintain the feud. Gene is inventive; he makes his own rules for finding the big yellows. He watches when the May apple is in full leaf or the buds come on the crab apple. Such things, he thinks, tell when yellow morels will push up through wet leaves. I'm of the old school. My grandfather hunted morels for ninety years. When he says the little reds come first to be tasted, the medium browns follow as temptation, and then only comes the prince of the morels—the big yellow—I believe him. Gene laughs at my hunting reds and browns for indications of future yellows and hints they are all that children can find. I sneer at his May apples in full leaf, reminding Gene he is not picking a bouquet of wild flowers. We are both agreed, however, there must be a warm April rain.

At last comes that April morning. We awaken to the patter of big drops on our window. We had gone to bed friends; now we're enemies. Our mother cannot understand this overnight change. But mushroom hunting is a man's game to be fought with men's rules. Women may go stumbling through the woods and accidentally find a couple of mushrooms, but they will never understand the game. The first part of it is a waiting one. We try to maneuver the other into starting the hunt. The first one to leave hunts mushrooms; the second hunts the hunter in order to steal his choice spots. I usually lose this initial battle of nerves, as I do not have as much patience as Gene when I hear April rain on the

roof. I use every kind of trick. I sneak off without breakfast; I walk over to town and keep on going. Gene is not easy to fool. The smell of the big yellow morels makes him doubly sneaky. If I gather a bag of mushrooms fifteen pounds in weight —no matter—I lose if Gene should find where I got them.

There are mornings when I go up the railroad tracks in the wide open. This is a dare Gene cannot forgive. I walk the rails to look taller. Nonchalantly, I never look back—I know he is there. At first this trick made Gene so angry he would not follow me. Now he swallows his pride and hunts me and the big yellows.

My problem is first to make my escape, then find the big yellows, and later trick Gene into some dead spot where he imagines I'm hunting. I let him think he's found my favorite spot. It is not easy, since spotting the furtive big yellows is hard enough without Gene as my shadow.

We each have a call that lets the other know he has been found. I dread his crow call with the laughing last caw. It is a mean laugh, for crows don't belong in the bluffs but on some rotten sycamore along a stagnant slough. He detests my dove which coos five times instead of four. But at least my dove is of the bluffs, where it can sit and brood on a dead limb over a deep pool.

When I am sure I have Gene in tow, I dive off the tracks into some rocky ravine where there are plenty of blackberry brambles. These are better than dewberry brambles, because they are taller and have sharper thorns. I always leave a clear trail through the brambles just to make Gene cuss and follow after. I am younger, smaller, thinner. I get a mean delight just imagining Gene's

following me through the brambles. I'll bet he often wishes he was light and wiry like me. Of course, I do not wait around to enjoy the sight of his torture, for it is in the brambles that I gain precious time. The low bushes are full of water drops, and my shoes are sloshing in the first hundred yards, but who cares—the big yellows may be hiding over the next hill. If I don't hurry, they'll have time to take cover. Running in the rain with wet branches switching across my face is part of the joy of mushroom hunting. My mother says it is a good way to catch pneumonia, but she can't understand men's games.

Next I look for a creek with a pebble bottom. The bluffs are filled with these in springtime, and they fork off in a million directions. I wonder that Gene has any hair left when he reaches a spot where my creek goes in four ways. I tiptoe out of the water on some white rock which will not talk to Gene of my whereabouts. I double across a bluff ledge, watching for rolling stones, and then head for my favorite spot.

It is hard enough finding the big yellows with both eyes, but I must keep one eye alert for Gene. Otherwise I'll hear the sacrilegious caw of a laughing crow and know that my valley of ferns and big yellow sponges is profaned property.

As soon as I am fairly sure of having lost him for at least a half hour—nobody can lose him longer than that anywhere—my real search begins. The trick is to find just one big yellow. They love company; fifteen or twenty will cluster around the same tree stump. Their number does not make them simpler to find; it makes them easier to step on. This is the worst sin of a mushroom hunt-

er. Gene often accuses me of this in his anxiety to beat me. The big yellows are never in the center of my vision but always at the corner of my eye. I seem to discover the first one by accident: tripping over an old log or taking one last look before I give up. Skill alone won't bring the big yellows out of hiding. You can't realize the fun of finding them unless you have kicked the wet leaves some April morning only to have a big yellow peep out at you. It's a thrill you can't explain. They feel like a big sponge—only more solid—and they smell clean as cool shadows and April raindrops. When my paper sack is full, I look for Gene to lead him to destruction. Sometimes, he has already found me. This is always an accident, I like to think.

Since he has a sixth sense, I must not bend the May apple when looking under it or trample the fern. Sometimes I accidentally crunch a fern tip, though I'm more light-footed than Gene. These signs he cannot miss, though I accuse him of being a blind clubfoot. I must cover with wet, matted leaves the spot where I pick every yellow morel, otherwise he'll spy the stems. If his lucky eyes find me at my favorite spot, I must convince him that I was leading him there all along. There are no big yellows around, see. He must be able to hear them growing, for always he will point a teasing finger at one.

Still, the most bitter times are when I really do trick him, leading him to spots where I am sure no big yellows ever peep out and draw back under the leaves when I approach. His crow laughs from a ledge above me that I am found, but my dove brags back that he is a fool. We meet and chat about such misleading

things as the weather or the bluebird on the pawpaw bush. Then right smack at my feet he spies a big yellow. I am never able to convince him that this spot is not my special place. I do not know which is trickier—the big yellows or my brother.

When Gene gets tired of trailing me and disgusted because he can't find me on the bluffs, he'll give me a dare.

"Meet me in the bottoms, youngster, if you ain't afraid of getting lost."

If Mother hears this, she bawls Gene out because she does not like me wandering there. This embarrasses me, for I don't like to be considered young.

He takes off on a run, knowing I cannot keep up with him. This seems unfair, but I expect it during the mushroom season. The bar lands were made for Gene's flat feet. There he can make heavy tracks, and the muck swallows all traces of them in five seconds. He couldn't hide ten seconds were I trailing him on the bluffs, because the ferns would whisper to me everywhere he tried to hide.

Those parting words of his, "if you ain't afraid of getting lost," always terrorize me. I must be acting older than he knows I am. The bar lands run along the Mississippi bottoms between the river and the first levee. They are two miles wide and a wilderness of willows, cattails, watergrass, and snakes. It is hard to find a landmark. I am not tall. The willows all the same height are so thick I must wriggle my way like a weasel. I sometimes get lost and hate it when Mother has to send Gene back for me if I'm not home for dinner — Gene the triumphant big brother and me feeling hungry and

ashamed.

He sits on the levee, and his crow squawks and laughs. My dove ignores him. I use his voice for a guide but never go to meet him. I slip home another way and leave him for an hour of hoarse shouting from the levee. This makes him so angry he boasts he'll leave me sticking in the quicksand. This, he doesn't say where Mother can hear him.

I do not try to track Gene below the first levee. It is too much like trailing a water snake across muddy water, a moccasin and a cottonmouth at that. I usually make a wild guess where Gene may be and then slosh through the mud, watching for snakes which slither among the cattails. Sometimes I climb a big sycamore to look for him. He calls this cheating. My dove does not often call five times, for I seldom find Gene. I'm rather proud my bird keeps silent.

Here the big yellow morels sit on rises of ground above the blue-black water. They creep among elephant ears, peer behind driftwood, and duck into the watergrass when I approach. They are usually heavier than my bluff morels but never taller. Gene brags on the weight of his find, while I measure mine with a ruler.

On the rare occasions when I find Gene, my dove call booms over the bottoms. It is an art to make the sad, gentle dove's coo sound insulting. Gene agrees this is the one ability I have. He makes out he was looking for me all the while for fear I would fall into the slough or get lost again a hundred feet from our back door. Must not worry Mother! This last comment is unfair. I point out the yellow morel stem on the ground, and we come to blows. He is not much good at covering up the

big yellow's stem, and I am not near his weight in a fight; so it is soon over.

I said we always hunted singly, but I forgot there are sometimes the neighbor boys. They feel the urge for the big yellows, too, but the moment they enter the woods, we call a truce, Gene and I. We cannot have them finding more big yellows than we do. I like these brief periods of peace, because Gene is not such a bad guy except when he is hunting against me.

It is a team—he carries me piggy back over the knee-deep mud of the bar land and I show him the easiest ways through the brambles. I learn a few tricks from him like watching for a wood thrush hunting along the ground, because it loves cool shadowy spots as much as the big yellows. I tell him how I look for places burnt out last fall, and usually the morels are there among the half-burnt pieces of logs. It is easier for us to spot them together, for while they are ducking from one of us, the other spies them. No yellow morel would be safe did we hunt very long together. This is another reason we must hunt against each other: to give the morels a fighting chance. We compare the colors of ferns, for the

morels seem to hide under new green. We mark the spot on the ground where the sunshine sifts through the trees at daybreak. Morels love sunlight but only during the first hour of the day.

Now his crow calls me when he's found a good spot, and my dove sings happily that I am coming. We first invented these calls to deceive our neighbors, and only later used them on each other. We put our find into the same bag so that there will be no arguments. The neighbors can't even tell we're in the woods, although they are so close they walk upon our shadows. The only morels they find are the ones we call cripples—the martyrs set out alone as decoys to keep the searcher from the main group. The outsiders soon give up following us, a signal for our war with each other to flame anew. The peace was glorious, but this new battle is doubly so.

About the end of April, one of us will find several big yellows with the tops withered and brown. The mushroom season is over. We are friends again. My mother is happy to hear a crow and a dove chatting sociably as they work in the cornfield. The sound is deceiving.

We are very sad.



The Man Who Stalked People

● William Sayres

Fred Hubbel was the only man I have ever known who liked to pad along after people on all fours. The most curious thing about his hobby was that he had succeeded in bringing many people to bay. He was particularly successful with the professionally employed. According to Fred, this was because professional workers were more susceptible to guilt feelings about their livelihood than other workers; they tended to feel that they were not really working at all, and that someday they would be found out and shipped to one kind of mine or another.

Personally, I thought Fred was odd. Many others thought he was crazy, but I did not. After all, he was functional. He earned over twelve thousand a year selling imported pipes and steam bath blueprints, and had contributed generously to the cause of Food, Inc. abroad and Reducocal, Inc. domestically. He wasn't married, but nobody's perfect.

His technique was interesting to me, though I admit I'm easily intrigued. When visitors he felt were frauds turned to leave, he swiftly slipped to hands and knees and trailed them for several hundred yards. He was acutely sensitive to their anxieties; the least sign of a looking-back would bring him to his feet. "Is this your lighter?" he would say, holding out his own. Or "I thought I ought to make sure you knew. The bus stops on the corner, *on the other side of the light.*"

Sometimes, though, it was unnecessary to say such things. When the guilt level was high enough, the person tracked would turn around so fearfully and stare so anxiously that Fred would say nothing about his lighter or the bus. "What's the matter?" the game would say. "Don't you know?" Fred would say, staring coolly back. "But . . . but . . . I . . ." the game would stammer, ". . . but how . . . what does it have to do with you?" "That," Fred would answer calmly, "will make no difference, *unless you keep hiding it.*"

At this point the game was customarily ready to unburden his soul, in some detail.

There were, of course, variations on the soul-tapping pattern. Fred had many gambits to motivate the balky. Even such a cryptic remark as "*Look at my knees!*" (These usually had grass and earth on them) would often end resistance. Or he might show his smudged hands: this seemed to be more effective with women, and Fred spoke of it as the Lady Macbeth Confrontation. Much, obviously, depended on timing, and Fred found that six minutes of taut silence followed by the simple phrase "*It's time now, isn't it?*" would work wonders. A particularly susceptible type needed no words at all; after the conventional six minutes, Fred could slowly return to his hands and knees, and this type would follow suit, being unable subsequently to rise without assistance. One matron, in fact, was so shattered by this

treatment that for years after her encounter with Fred, she would suddenly, in the midst of various social events, drop heavily to hands and knees and repeat until removed, "But I never really meant to *keep it*."

An acquaintance once asked Fred what *good* it was. Fred looked frankly at the acquaintance and started to answer; then, as if he had seen something he hadn't noticed before, Fred looked more closely at the left eye of the acquaintance and said sadly, "It must have taken courage for you to ask that." The acquaintance told me sheepishly he meant to pursue it further, but didn't.

The drama that engrossed, and continues to engross, all of us who knew Fred took place shortly after he met John Bidley, who liked to ambush people. John enjoyed concealing himself within striking distance of pathways, doorways, and hallways. When the intended victim came by, John would either leap out violently, arms waving, or quietly reach out and tap the victim on the shoulder. Either approach seemed to have a shattering effect on the victims. The fact that they all knew John (otherwise they would have sent him to jail) did not seem to mitigate the shock of a body hurtling from the shadows at them or a sharp tap when they least expected it. They found it difficult to join in John's hearty laughter after the ambush. To be honest about it, most of us thought John was obnoxious.

Fred did too. After all, he reminded us, his stalking had some *purpose* to it. It was done *seriously*; there was no raucous laughter at the victim's expense. For his part, John let it be known that he considered Fred a glum little fuddy-duddy who had no sense of humor. Be that as

it may, we tended to side with Fred. At least he had the decency to stay behind a person. He was, in fact, no bother at all unless one chose to turn around. I say this to make it clear that I cannot write this account without a certain bias.

As we expected, Fred and John disliked each other at once. It was not, moreover, unexpected that Fred decided he would have to stalk John about the same time that John decided to ambush Fred. We were greatly intrigued by the possibilities, since this was a real test for the talents of both. How could you ambush someone who was systematically stalking you? On the other hand, how could you stalk someone who was waiting in ambush for you? For either to succeed conclusively, it seemed, the other must certainly fail.

The issue came to a head a week after their first meeting. The occasion was a Halloween party given by my uncle, Clinton Sayres, on his farm outside North Chatham. Ever since my uncle got the notion that the less he planted the more money he would get from the government, he has placed progressively less of his land under cultivation, until he now seems to be quite well off raising a few radishes and string beans over the septic tank. Most of his land is consequently overgrown with high grasses, bushes, and trees: all in all, an excellent proving ground for both stalking and ambushing. Needless to say, Fred and John used it precisely as that.

The Halloween party, unfortunately, called for costumes. Clinton has his blind spots. It's not really because he *likes* costume parties that he gives them; it's just that when the time comes to give a party, he

can't seem to think of any other kind. Someone waggishly suggested that Fred should come to this one dressed as a bloodhound, and John as a spider, but there is always somebody who tries to make a silly thing of a serious business. Actually, Fred came as a pirate and John as Little Bo-peep.

They avoided each other throughout the party. Fred excelled at some games and John at others. For example, Fred could pad from wall to wall carrying beans on a knife without dropping a single one, and John could plunge his jaws so vigorously and decisively into a bucket of water in which apples bobbed that he would have one seized before the bucket stopped rocking. But all this, we felt, was only a build-up for the clash to come after the party was over.

Shortly before midnight there was a sudden squall which sent more leaves than rain hurtling by and against the windows. It was—or so it seemed to us—a signal for another kind of wildness, and I cannot but think that Fred and John were strongly affected by it. They were visibly keyed up, and eyed each other frequently and with mounting hostility. When the squall subsided, and the night became as calm as the eye of a hurricane, the time was clearly at hand. I looked around for John to see if he realized it. He was gone; the game, then, was afoot. Anxiously I looked for Fred, but there was no need to warn him; he was also gone.

I was not the first to notice. Uncle Clinton and several others were already on their way to the roof. I hurried upstairs after them.

I had been on the roof before, of course, but never as late as this. Although the moon was nearly full and

no longer hidden by the storm clouds, I stumbled over jugs and kegs before I got my bearings. Since Uncle Clinton's roof is flat, without any slope at all, there were also various drainage troughs and pipes to trip on. Not all the pipes were drainage pipes, though. Uncle Clinton has developed one of the most ingenious and complex stills in this part of the country. Even I cannot tell which pipes lead into which barrels below, and what they carry. Uncle Clinton believes in storing his yield not in the cellar but right there on the roof, particularly next to the chimneys: hence the jugs and kegs. Uncle Clinton claims there is something about the heat of the chimney combined with the cold of the night air that gives his product a unique flavor. "It's smokiness," he once told me, "from the chimney and dewiness from the night air." It was also, he insisted, legal. He didn't sell his product, he gave it to friends. He gave it to all who asked, and to many who didn't.

As we looked over the railing at the fields below, we could see almost everything there was to be seen. We could see the sweep of the land half-way around the house, and the rest of it from the other side of the roof. Uncle Clinton was the first to spot John and Fred. John had left a small tree and slipped behind a larger one, and Uncle Clinton saw the flash of petticoats. Almost immediately, although John's movement could not have been seen except from above, Fred padded from one bush to another closer to the large tree; Uncle Clinton caught the glint of moonlight on the handle of the buccaneer's sword. Now that we looked where he indicated, we could make out both figures. The view of each was

blocked from the other, yet each obviously knew approximately where the other was, and they were drawing closer together. At first I thought this meant Fred was catching up with John, and I was pleased. On reflection, however, I had to concede that from John's vantage point, Fred was that much closer to ambush. So far, it was impossible to tell who had the advantage.

Intently we watched them, slipping and padding from tree to tree and bush to bush. The range narrowed. They were now almost directly below us. We were all impressed with the ease with which they changed positions and the uncanny way they kept their respective orientations. They made no sound, wasted no motion. Ordinarily, of course, John would not have moved at all before the final strike; he would have found his place and waited. But it was quickly established that Fred would not move until John did; so the shifting and shuttling went on, until at last they were so close to each other that a showdown was imminent. The next move would surely bring it about, and the question that made us press against the railing in suspense was: who would make it?

Fred made it. When I saw it, I thought he had lost all control. To my horror, he headed *straight toward the bush behind which John waited.*

We could see John crouch in anticipation. A man with less poise and confidence might have been startled, might even have started to retreat. But John did not so much as quiver unnecessarily. A slight dip, a moderate tensing, and he was ready to spring. I almost called to Fred, to warn him, but so fascinated

was I that I could find no voice to use. Indeed, my throat was so dry I clutched one of the jugs that seemed to be clustered around my feet and began to sample it quietly.

Fred was now only four paces from the bush. Surely he must have known how inevitably that fourth pace would bring John upon him? Suddenly it was exhilaratingly clear that he *did* know. At the end of his third pace, just before he reached the point at which the ambush was customarily consummated, Fred turned sharply and sprang into the bush at John.

So precisely had he estimated John's position that he landed almost on John's toes. To say that John was stricken would be a pathetic understatement. He literally crumpled under the shock. Poised to leap, he had been leaped at; primed to spring, he had nowhere to spring; on the brink of his ambush, he had been brought to bay.

As we all knew, he could not retreat without completing the disaster. Fred would begin to track him the moment he moved. There was no refuge now; to try to slip behind bushes or dart behind trees would be laughable; Fred was right there. Yet John was in no condition to keep his ground; he could scarcely keep his balance. That he was dressed as Little Bopeep, confronted by a glowering pirate (Fred would, of course, be glowering), seemed now to add to his distress. It was as if with his sheep he had lost his manhood. The more I thought about that, the more confusing the symbolism seemed, but I was sure it was important.

We waited for John to speak. He said only one thing. Pointing at the bush from which Fred had descended

on him, he said quaveringly, "Over . . . over . . ." It was all he could manage.

"Yes," said Fred somberly, "it's over."

Unresisting, John turned and walked toward the path leading to the gate. Fred trailed him expertly, but there was no need now for expertise; John did not look back. It was obvious from his bearing that he would not be able to ambush anyone again.

As they disappeared into the darkness beyond the gate, I felt exultant, yet somehow sad. The sight of those smudged petticoats retreating through the gate had filled me with compassion for all people, and I sensed that here on Uncle Clinton's roof a profound truth had been revealed, possibly even two. Reluctant to break the spell that must have possessed us all, I reached humbly for another jug. The others, I noticed, were doing the same.

MONTE CASSINO: 17 November 1944

• John William Corrington

mother

i am smoking now
tell dad i got the missal
by the way
yesterday we were at a famous
monastery
i forgot the name
but the others were there
first

and the long
slope below the wall was
covered with dead

like
sleeping pilgrims

like
spastics groping through
the way of the cross

and finally we got word that even
though some
monks and
fine art works
were there
inside

we would have to bomb
then later we stormed the place
and
found it full of
monks and art objects
and death
and

one of the others sniped from above
the main altar
from among three kings
adoring
and shepherds watching
over the sleeping babe
'til someone
in the sacristy
caught him
with a burst
and then he
spiralled out of that fresco heaven
falling a long long way
to land
a mash of boots and broken flesh
his blond hair ringed with
blood
his stiffening eyes hung
on a bent crucifix
and christ
staring back at him

anyhow they left
him lying there 'til
after dark
when
two monks tore
him and christ apart
and put him with the rest

tomorrow we head north
did i tell you

mother
i am smoking now

Symposium on The Role of Art in Life

In this second large installment of the current series, *Four Quarters* offers two articles rich in concepts and in illustrative citations. While it will be evident that they explore opposite polarities of the continuing subject, they do share two important traits. Both maintain constant relevance to the highest metaphysical truth; and both embody the closely-worked results of wide experience and long concentration.

The Editors.

Aesthetic Value in Common Life

● Bertram Jessup

Aesthetic interest and aesthetic value occur most familiarly not in isolation at the level of the fine arts confined in special places, such as museums, but in common life in the midst of everyday affairs. Art, before it is taken to the museum, has its life in the cave, the home, the market place, the hunting ground, the place of worship, and on and in the grave. It is originally and lastingly part of all life. Even when it occurs, as it often has and does, as an independent object or activity, it occurs first and most widely in the broad common life and not as a secluded and specialized pursuit of a few for the few. In its earliest known manifestations and in its broadest continuing expression among all people today, the aesthetic interest is not separated out from other life interests, but mingles with them, serves them in various ways, or lives side by side with them in equal importance to the whole of life.

The furthest records of history and the earliest remains of prehistoric man express or exhibit the interest in art, either independent of or auxiliary to his other interests, such as the practical, the religious and eschatological, and the social. It seems probably to have been both. Some archaeological objects in which we find aesthetic qualities of shape, design, and texture, and an apparent concern for them, are clearly objects of use-tools, weapons, conveyances, and utensils. Others seem clearly to be objects of worship or of religious meaning of some kind—amulets, talismans, figures of gods and other divine agencies, propitiatory symbols, etc. But still others seem hard to explain except as purely aesthetic in original intention. Thus there are

found in paleolithic, Cro-Magnon man's caves flint arrowheads, bone needles, and pebble cups, all of which were obviously objects of use for domestic life or for the hunt or war. There are also found drawings, paintings, and carvings, which may have served in part or altogether religious beliefs and practices. But in addition, there are found, too, such things as perforated shells, indicating a probable interest in adornment for its own sake—in the form of necklaces. But in any case, earliest man could and did, draw, paint, carve, chisel, and model, and he was thus able to satisfy an interest, whether direct or indirect, in qualities of form, design, and color, which come to us with aesthetic appeal through the 25,000 or more intervening years.

The aesthetic in the prehistoric is not rare, but universal. Wherever in the world, archaeology has turned up the artifacts of the dim past, the aesthetic interest is evident in its findings. Thus, for example, of the recently unearthed and studied prehistoric stone sculpture of the American Pacific Northwest, it is observed that "the technical proficiency and the strong, often astounding aesthetic qualities of this sculpture establish it . . . as one of the great arts of the American Indian," that is, of the pre-white-contact Indian. And, though most of its objects are utilitarian, "superbly shaped and carved stone tools, implements," mauls, clubs, handles of pestles, etc., "the presence of . . . so many decorated utilitarian objects suggests the existence of an art-for-art's sake and connoisseurship.¹

If we turn from archaeology, the inferential study through his cultural remains of the life and interests of prehistoric man, to anthropology, the direct, observational study of existent and recent primitive peoples, we find the same universal concern for aesthetic values. The observed fact is expressed in the following summary statement by one anthropologist:

No people known to us, however hard their lives may be, spend all their time, all their energies in the acquisition of food and shelter, nor do those who live under more favorable conditions and who are free to devote to other pursuits the time not needed for securing their sustenance occupy themselves with purely industrial work or idle away the days in indolence. Even the poorest tribes have produced work that gives to them aesthetic pleasure, and those whom a bountiful nature or a greater wealth of inventions has granted freedom from care, devote much of their energy to the creation of works of beauty.²

"In one way or another," concludes this anthropologist, on the basis of his wide and diverse studies of primitive cultures, "aesthetic pleasure is felt by all members of mankind." Another writer in the same field, agreeing with still a third, voices with equal conviction the same conclusion. "I will postulate," he writes, "the aesthetic impulse as one of the irreducible components of the human mind, as a potent agency from the very beginnings of human existence . . . I hold with Jochelson that 'the aesthetic taste is as strong and spontaneous a longing of primitive man as are beliefs.'"³

¹Paul S. Wingert, Introduction to the catalogue of the Exhibition, *Prehistoric Stone Sculpture of the Pacific Northwest* (Portland, 1952).

²Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 9.

³Robert H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion* (New York, 1924), p. 260.

The aesthetic interest is then for primitive man, as it was for prehistoric man and as it remains for us, an affair of life going on with other affairs, and not an occasional or culturally deferred activity depending upon special conditions, favoring developments, or the peculiar interest of rare individuals. It belongs to all life of all people.

That at bottom it remains universal in occurrence and appeal, even though our specialized and largely compartmentalized civilization tends to put the aesthetic at its upper reaches of "fine art" into a realm of its own, is not hard to prove. The proof lies in ourselves at almost every hour of our daily life. Our immediate life is a stream of direct experience consisting of sensations, perceptions, actions, memories, and anticipations.

Each of these contents or forms of our experience has a double role. On the one hand, each functions, in a broad sense, practically, that is, in a sense broad enough to include the intellectual and theoretical. Sensation is a sign of something further to be expected; memory is a guide to present response and belief; action is an on-going task to be finished; and anticipation foresees an event to be welcomed or a threat to be prepared for. Much, perhaps most of our life is practical in primary character. For the most part we are engaged in going on from what comes to us in immediate experience, taking it as material and doing something with it, or as data, and inferring something from it, or interpreting it. But not all our interest is practical, and rarely completely. For, on the other hand, each of these components of our experience functions as self-sufficient in its immediate occurrence or as an ingredient in a self-sufficient complex of immediate experience. The sensation received or the thing perceived, besides being a pointer to the future or a sign of something additional not yet discovered or a datum which sets a problem to be solved, is also a quality or a quality-complex which can invite absorbed attention to itself, that is, is a character which can be attended to as such. And when we attend in this way, even partially or momentarily, then our experience, whatever it may otherwise be, is aesthetic or has an aesthetic ingredient. And when we attend more largely or steadily, then our experience, even if it continues to be in the main practical, takes on a major aesthetic tone, becomes qualitatively alive.

Occasionally, at least, we all interrupt or put aside the practical, the work, or the problem, and then we turn completely to the aesthetic, there being nothing else to turn to. We stop to look at the thin moon with its one attendant star, or dwell in the recaptured feel of remembered sea water breaking over our heads, or we linger with present satisfaction over the completed task laid qualitatively out before us as a thing done or arrived at.

No one in his normal living is without such aesthetic experiences, both as ingredients and as wholes. The farmer in ploughing takes more than practical satisfaction in the straightness and fresh loaminess of the new-turned furrow. The housewife looks at her well-tidied room in its immediately perceived neatness and sees more than a useful and convenient disposition of furniture. Even a man's devotion to his accomplished work in business or profession may at times become detached and turn almost into an aesthetic devotion. Charles Lamb gives us an example, whimsically rendered, but nonetheless authentic in point. He is writing of the clerks in the old South-

Sea House, among them the accountants. Of these warders of profits, practical functionaries certainly, Lamb says from the inside, "to a genuine accountant the difference of proceeds is as nothing. The fractional farthing is as dear to his heart as the thousands which stand before it." That is, a *genuine* accountant is one to whom figures and balances, regardless of which direction, are "dear to the heart" in achievement and contemplation.

If this example be thought to be too literary and perhaps extravagant, we may turn to a nearer and more literal report of how the aesthetic works into or lies behind the seemingly altogether practical—in this case the intellectual, problem-solving interest. It is from a contemporary psychologist speaking on problems in the psychology of art.⁴ The psychologist, he says, studies behavior. For example, "he observes white rats running through a maze." His preparations are painstaking, his observations as minutely exact as possible. And all that the psychologist here does may, it seems, be described in terms of his objective and exclusive interest in the animal's behavior. "But," says this psychologist, "I am convinced that very few psychologists will do only this and nothing else. Most of them—some more, some less—will be aware of a rather thrilling spectacle, the sight of a living being trying to attain a certain place as quickly as possible; *a phenomenon with its own qualities*,⁵ qualities which are not captured in the record of the animal's accomplishments."

It is interesting to note further that this interest in the "aesthetic quality" (the psychologist so names it) of the rat-maze spectacle is found to be not merely extraneous to or innocently subsequent upon the completion of the psychological experiment, but auxiliary to it. The two interests are seen as intimately bound together in reciprocal service. Such aesthetic "awareness," says this writer, "has led to concepts as important for the understanding of the rat's behavior as any of the measurements . . ." and the psychologist "who can enjoy the spectacle of the running through a maze as he enjoys the spectacle of dance or the glory of a beautiful face" is actually strengthened in his scientific motivation.⁶

The foregoing examples of the occurrence of aesthetic interest in a variety which are not primarily aesthetic suggest a further observation: The subjective fact that the aesthetic interest may occur anywhere rests on the objective fact that aesthetic quality exists everywhere. Both are universal. Aesthetic quality is always with us or waiting around us, because basically aesthetic is simply quality itself—the sound, the feel, the look, the perceived character of a thing, a situation, or an action. No object, simple or complex, and no state of affairs lacks quality. It must have the quality which it has in order to be what it is. And when we become qualitatively aware of an object and interested in it, then the object becomes, even if only for a moment, an aesthetic object, like the farmer's furrow, the housewife's tidied room, the accountant's exact balances, and the scientist's rat-maze spectacle.

⁴K. Koffka, "Problems in the Psychology of Art," in *Art: A Bryn Mawr Symposium* (Bryn Mawr, 1940), pp. 180-81.

⁵Italics added.

⁶K. Koffka, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

The universal presence of aesthetic quality as an objective fact in everyone's environment at all times does not, to be sure, guarantee for everyone a rich aesthetic experience. It merely provides universal opportunities for such experience at the level of common human living. Most of us—perhaps most of the time—do not take the opportunities offered. The aesthetic awareness which is inescapable and to be had without effort is often so feeble, thin, hasty, and minimal as hardly to constitute an aesthetic experience at all. Quality to be actually aesthetic and not merely potentially so has to be attended to and felt for itself and not for some practical or theoretical purpose. But mostly our attentions to qualities and things are practical and theoretical. We notice a tree in our path only to walk around it, not to look at it nor trace the leafy patterns of its boughs, its bark texture, or the ground-swell at its roots. Our recognition of things, though it must always be through sensations of some quality, is most often at such a qualitative minimum that it scarcely counts aesthetically. Of the rich qualitied tree, we take only a blurred fragment in practical glance sufficient to enable us to avoid walking into it. And most often, the recognition which we give things is merely a token recognition, just enough to set off a practical reaction or an intellectual inquiry. When we react this way, we take things not as things, and qualities not as qualities, but as signs, directives, or evidence. Or we take them as instances to be classified in types, rather than as individuals to be experienced in their individuality.

There is, of course, nothing wrong in the fact that our daily recognitions are largely practical and intellectual. As such, they are altogether necessary for our practical life and intellectual pursuits, and they become deplorable only in excess, that is, if carried into habits which exclude or impoverish aesthetic awareness. Aesthetic experience is thus rightly limited by the necessities and urgencies of our practical life, but wrongly limited further by the habits of practical perception which we carry beyond the practical needs. In any case, it remains true that everything in our perceptual environment is available for aesthetic experience. Whether or not it becomes so actually depends upon us, whether we can or will permit it.

A corollary of this observation is that there are no objects which are "properly" or intrinsically aesthetic in an exclusive sense, so that there are some things which are aesthetic in having aesthetic quality and some which are not aesthetic in failing to have it.⁷ Willing and interested attention to any quality makes it aesthetic quality and the thing qualitatively attended to an aesthetic object. And nothing whatsoever is in principle excluded from such possible attention.

The universal occurrence of such willing attention and interest is the point of emphasis in these pages. The archaeologist, the anthropologist, and the historian, we have seen, produce ample evidence and record of this interest in all times and with all peoples. But, as we have noted too, we have ample evidence of it also in our own daily living. On the basis of such evidence we come to the understanding that aesthetic value and its pursuit

⁷This is not the same as saying that no objects are properly works of *art* or have *artistic* quality.

is something which concerns everyone, that it is everyone's affair. Not only do all men find aesthetic value in the common enjoyment of nature and the simple pleasures of sensation and perception; they also create aesthetic value in the things which they make and dispose in their daily lives. And in this creative activity, no matter how homely or modest, they can rightly be said to make art; for it is there where art begins and has its widest occurrence with every person when he is qualitatively concerned in what he sees or does.

We may then pause to reflect before we go on to think of that specialized activity and that specialized product which we call "fine art" that we as ordinary persons, let us say, not artists, critics, or connoisseurs, we who seem to be engaged for the main part in non-aesthetic affairs, have more daily acquaintance with art and more of a serious interest in art than we may ever have thought. When we turn to thinking about art, then, we turn to something with which we are already familiar in some important degree or kind—with which we are daily at home—and not to something rare and strange.

Such reflections we will take as our approach to our further questions. Taking art broadly or generically to mean any activity productive of sensuous or perceptual satisfaction for its own sake, we will say that it does not first come into being with a specialist in art, either maker or enjoyer. Rather we will say that with art it is in no wise different than with other human activities or interests—economics, for example. In a basic sense, all men who manage their affairs at all are practicing economists; they produce and consume and traffic and trade, with more or less success and with at least tolerable understanding, irrespective of the existence or non-existence of professional economists. The economic interest is everyone's interest and is pursued by all. So also and everywhere all men have and practice the aesthetic interest. With pleasure they see, hear, and feel the nature which lies around them, big and little. And to their own works and things they add variously and freely the touch of art, which is a natural and human want and satisfaction. Everywhere men dance and sing, make music and adorn and decorate their useful objects, their places of living and working and their own persons. And in doing so—however badly or well—they give daily expression to their interest in art, to their aesthetic sense, whether or not they ever betake themselves to a studio or museum. They feel and they create aesthetic value.

Fine art, the work of the artist as specialist, has then its beginning and end in the life of man altogether. The work of art, strictly so called, grows out of and satisfies a need which is all-human. Fine art in life comes from the artist, but the artist and his work also come *from* life.



Nine Demands For A Systematic Theory of Literature

● Bruce Olsen

A philosophy of art, as I take it, consists of generalization about art in contrast to its practice or appreciation. A body of generalizations worth dignifying as a philosophy falls somewhere along an axis between the poles of system and strategy. The activity of a strategic view is criticism, the art of elucidation and evaluation, which has flourished brilliantly in this century to give our minds hands to turn a work this way or that; it attempts to create a value scene with its emphasis usually on an individual work or works; it uses ideas to induce perspectives, but its frame of reference belongs to the history of taste. In contrast, the activity of a systematic view is to find the truth about the nature of the arts to stand up under the examination of reason and experience; it attempts to collect an ordered body of generalizations in the direction of a science and regards individual works as instances of general laws. In practice, of course, this logical distinction is often blurred. The critic who uses an insight into the nature of art to further his arguments usually means what he says, and the aesthetician, defining his comprehensive view, argues from arbitrary and limiting assumptions. T. S. Eliot's overpublicized bit of scientism, the "objective correlative," for instance, was part of a strategy to urge a more impersonal view of art; the careful generalizations of Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*, on the other hand, relate anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and other disciplines to literature in an open crucible of knowledge.

My primary interest is in the development of systematic theories of literature toward a science. I use the word *science* seriously, not to invoke prestige or precision which does not exist, but to emphasize the obligations and responsibilities which a systematic theory might possess. I should like to argue that literary aesthetics has been hampered more by its lack of sophistication in theory-making than by the lack of objectivity of its phenomena; that, indeed, the problem of objectivity itself has been sadly confused by inadequate formulations. Despite its expansive terminology, literary theory has been timid, its terms too closely bound to common sense, its problems stated in ways that could not possibly lead to adequate answers. The traditional terms of analysis—plot, character, narrative, symbol, image, meter—are technical terms which come after and not before the creation and comprehension of a work; the primitive storyteller surely did not worry about the relation of plot to theme. Although often considered to be constituent parts, they are in fact only ways of describing a literary work, terms *about* and not *of*. The work itself does not care how it is described. The use of such terms and the concepts underlying them has failed to answer the perennial question: If the apprehension of a literary work involves knowl-

edge, then how is that knowledge related to other kinds of knowledge? How and why does a literary work gain its peculiar value? What is the relationship of feeling and emotion to value? What is it, anyway, just how and where does it exist? How can we describe the complex involutions of form? To what extent is the apprehension of form objective? And many other questions. If common sense were adequate, then such problems long ago would have surrendered to the vast intelligence and effort expended on them.

The "organicist" literary theorists of the past forty years—Richards, Empson, Burke, Brooks, among many others—have sought functional concepts to answer old questions and have radically broadened our methods of attack. We still have much to learn about what a theory can do and cannot do from the history and philosophy of science. Consider this illustration from recent scientific history: A century ago one might easily conclude that human nature was empirically unknowable. The panorama of abnormal behavior seemed utterly mysterious—lunatics stood for months or years in one position, others heard strange voices; polite boys became vicious killers; paralyzed women walked again through mesmeric powers—one might say, as did Lady Macbeth's doctor, "This disease is beyond my practice." Yet today there is hardly any kind of human behavior which cannot be "understood" by relating it to a conceptual scheme. What has caused the difference? Few would claim that the collection of theories which make up psychology constitute a model science; they cannot tell us what it is like to be alive or offer a final view of man's nature. Yet they have given us some grasp on what seemed so impossible to get at, the dynamics of the human personality. The difference in our knowledge does not lie only in Freud's discovery of the unconscious, and other discoveries, but in the way the problems of the mind have been formulated. We have moved from a static faculty psychology, in which entities are hypostatized forces, definable only in relation to each other; we have introduced the concepts of field and function; we have moved from entity-thinking, the belief that we are locating physically locatable *things*, to the free power of conceptualizing entities from observed forces. The Id, Ego, and Superego were not conceived as separately contending grotesques marching about in our minds, but, as A. N. Whitehead reminded us with his "fallacy of misplaced concreteness," as hypostatizations of forces together representing a whole dynamic action. A poem (any literary work) is a less complex and more public thing than a human personality, in psychological terms—more public because it must, in order to communicate, be based upon a community of norms in language and other experiences, and less complex because its internal relations, also based on a community of norms, must be understandable to diverse minds. Despite the attempt to find universal principles, literary theorists have rarely sought broad enough ground. The results as reviewed, for instance, in Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* have something of the quality of Bitzer's definition of a horse:

"Bitzer," said Thomas Gradgrind. "Your definition of a horse."

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely, twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

"Now girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind. "You know what a horse is."¹

Modern science is characterized by reticence about final claims of truth and imaginative freedom to project solutions. Its philosophers understand that a science is the construction of internally ordered systems by which finite human beings relate observations to concepts, and not to an ultimately discoverable reality. The degree of abstraction now found in formal systems of knowledge represents an historical development of what constitutes a science, a view progressively less secure about final forms, and willing to regard empirical truth as a succession of hypotheses judged by their economy, comprehensiveness, objectivity, and predictiveness. Carl Hempel has offered this interesting analogy:

A scientific theory might . . . be likened to a complex spatial network: its terms are represented by the knots, while the threads connecting the latter correspond, in part, to the definitions and, in part, to the fundamental and derivative hypotheses included in the theory. The whole system floats, as it were, above the plane of observation and is anchored to it by rules of interpretation. These might be viewed as strings which are not part of the network but link certain points of the latter with specific places in the plane of observation. By virtue of these interpretive connections, the network can function as a scientific theory: from certain observational data, we may ascend, via an interpretive string, to some point in the theoretical network, thence proceed, via definitions and hypotheses, to other points, from which another interpretive string permits a descent to the plane of observation.²

If a theory is to be such a formal matter, one may ask, what would anyone want it for? The creation and understanding of literature proceeds very well without it, or in spite of it. Writers and readers alike often express their anti-intellectual distaste; it may be said to derive from, and to sponsor, characteristics of thought which are foreign to the arts, although a number of modern theorists have also been good poets.

We do need good theories, and for important reasons. Positivists, enforcing the scientific technique of neutralizing contexts from value and enjoying the prestige of their specific techniques, have explicitly or by implication dismissed literature as essentially non-referential and emotive. They need to be challenged with as much precision as possible on their own grounds. The semanticist who wrote, after quoting some lines from Blake, "These three verses . . . teach us nothing. They have to be read as music rather than as logic. They are language used emotively," though more blatant than most, was condescendingly urging a good thing on his readers. At various levels of sophistication this attitude is expressed without effective denial; literature and the other arts are froth on the deep ocean of responsible knowledge; it has to do with truths and assertions, yes, but more fundamentally with ambiguously unreal values and feelings and emotions—though

¹Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, ch. 2.

²Carl G. Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science*, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Chicago, 1952), v. 2, no. 7, p. 36.

of course good for you, full of intuitions, a splendid coronet for the tough-minded. By an inverse Gresham's law, the hard fact drives out the soft feeling, and the possessors of the hard facts declare their superior vision. A more positive reason for a literary theory, however, is that aesthetics can and ought to be a central, and not a peripheral, subject in the scheme of human knowledge; that it has to do with general patterns of integrating values and forms of which mathematics, logic, and the physical sciences might be viewed as special cases; that it can be an informing, integrating discipline, a spokesman rather than a garrulous stepchild. For what is the place of value in a world of facts? Although to expect answers may seem to be an extreme, perhaps chimerical, perhaps even humorous demand in the face of well-advertised struggles to make sense out of the world of art, I think it may be ascertained that the kinds of disciplines which make a literary theory possible are new and flourishing and, despite centuries of comment and disagreement, that imagination has hardly begun.

I should like therefore to list nine demands which I believe a systematic theory ought to meet at least in some degree and to indicate briefly how I believe this might be done.

1. *A theory should offer an adequate account of the mode of existence of a literary work.* If we are to describe a particular work by general laws, then we must know the nature of the thing we are describing. There are many possible ways of locating the aesthetic object, but the most useful definition will allow us (1) to conceive of a poem as a field in which apparently discrete elements, such as the sound patterns, the explicit and implicit knowledge, and the use of time, may be expressed as related; (2) to express the function of such elements; (3) to describe these functions with some degree of objectivity. We are free to project any kind of construct to establish a comprehensive view so long as such constructs are tied at various points to the plane of observation.

Let us take as an example of a whole form the humorous little poem, "Adam/Had 'em." Could we find grounds in which the poem could be said to exist that would help us to describe its peculiar nature? Its humorous effect seems to depend, at least in part, on the contrast between the flippancy and condensation of its expression and the consequence and size of its subject matter. Its *isness* as a form is not equivalent to such paraphrases as "Adam certainly started something!" or "Adam is the father of mankind." To define it as an arrangement of words on paper or a certain set of sounds is clearly inadequate; to point out the facts of its meter, rhyme, the connotations of its words, and so forth, does direct our attention to elements of its form, but the poem is not a collection of such observations. It has a certain *shape*: It has a dimension in time (as Aristotle said that an effective tragedy could not take two minutes or two weeks; it brings into sudden conjunction implicit and explicit knowledge—kin to a comedian's sense of timing); its pattern of sound is overdetermined and irrelevant to its paraphrasable content (interposing, for instance, a pause between the subject and the verb). It is, in other words, a complex set of linguistic signals which directs our perception into a certain pattern.

The most promising way of locating the poem, it seems to me, is to

consider it as an instance of a psychological field having a one-to-one (isomorphic) correspondence to other fields; and to define the aesthetic object (any given work) as the concept of the class of such psychological fields. Although it is not possible to discuss it here, my method of describing a poem as a psychological field involves postulating a calculus in which elements are discovered as members of classes, and mental acts of integration are defined as class-fixing operations. Logical concepts are used to express a psychological process—without implying that the structure of literature is logical—in order to find ground to express the similar function of apparently disparate elements.

2. *It must be objective.* Empirical objectivity implies the capacity to confirm a fact independently—to discover that a certain relationship is more or less the same according to different observers. A good theory will provide some means of demonstrating itself, though one should not expect more than a low grade of evidence. Unless a theory can provide some kind of demonstration, it is difficult to see how its views could be coercive among the wealth of possible views.

In the kind of psychological theory I have thus far proposed, *communication demonstrates objectivity*; that is, in order to have communication, we must have an interpersonal system of objective relationships which writers and readers variously share alike, a system of relationships which includes the elements of literary form. It is generally conceded that some kind of communication takes place—the denial of this would imply a thoroughgoing skepticism in which no cultural communion would be possible—but there is less agreement on the extent to which the kinds of effects deemed aesthetic are objectively part of a communication, or are matters of personal, cultural, and historical indoctrination. We may, however, set out examples of what would clearly be evidence that a literary theory had objectively described aspects of form involved in communication.

a. If we had an abstract description of the form of a literary work (one, that is, in which there was no reference to subject matter or other identifying characteristics as such), and if it could be independently identified as being like—having similar patterns to—the work of a certain author, then we would have evidence that some aspects of form were included in the description.

b. If, using an abstract description of form, we met the requirements of this form by substituting an entirely different set of words, and if these two different writings could then be independently judged as having similar qualities, then we should have strong evidence that the description and the concepts on which it was based were objective and communicated.

There is, incidentally, a simple and I believe conclusive experiment involving the use of parody (in which a conscious intention to imitate aspects of form is explicit) which demonstrates that complex matters of form are in fact communicated—and therefore have objective existence.

3. *It should possess unified and ordered terms and concepts.* This demand follows from what has been said about objectivity and function. The terms of a psychological theory will denote functionally related forces in a field. Such terms will usually employ a different level of analysis than those

used in common sense descriptions. The system of such terms, and the concepts to which they refer, should be as small as comprehensiveness permits.

This demand for unity and order means that mental acts denoted by such terms as metaphor, trope, point of view, irony, etc., will be subsumed, insofar as they prove meaningful, into terms that show them to be working together as an "organic" event. As a corollary to this functional view, it must be possible to consider a literary work as disorganized to a greater or lesser degree, or as being incoherent. Its terms and concepts should be able to distinguish "aesthetic mistakes."

4. *It should be able to describe the unique qualities of an individual work.* In all methods of literary description known to me the characterizing statements which refer to the form of a work have an intransitive relation to that work. I may say, for instance, that *Huckleberry Finn* contains a theme of death, that its tone varies from playfulness to bitterness, that it expresses some anti-democratic sentiments, that it is in part satirical, and so on. Any collection of such characterizing statements cannot represent the unique effect of a work because it would be possible to find or to create another work with an entirely different effect for which the statements would also be true. The recognition of this inadequacy has led some theorists, such as David Daiches and Stanley Edgar Hyman, to assert prematurely that no one theory could possibly be comprehensive, and that an eclectic view which surrounds the subject is the best compromise intellectually possible.

A major problem of literary theory is to represent the individual poem by model, or graph, so that one may describe, have a unique prescription for, the combination of perceived qualities in their shape and extension which constitute form, the expressed integration of texture and structure. The usual division of a literary work into form and content, into a series of cognitive acts upon which some shape has been imposed, should be altered by appealing to more fundamental ground. This should not be construed as meaning that literature "says nothing" or is purely abstract; it means only that there is an isolable form which is based upon a relatedness of such elements as meaning, time, and sound.

The figure a poem makes is not only a disembodied abstraction, a mere calculus of inner relationships, but also includes a "web of reality" by which language attaches us to experience. A kind of "epistemology" of language appears to be a necessary part of a psychological theory that could describe the unique effects of a work. We must go outside of a poem in order to go in. I have in mind the formalization of an analysis such as that given by Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis*, in which he reviews with remarkable sensitivity the shifting view of "reality" in western civilization on the basis of minute inclusions, exclusions, and connections of language. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" and "The door of Henry's lunchroom opened and two men came in" are the beginning statements of two arbitrarily delimited views of the "real," in which language both selects and excludes.

5. *It should describe the character of communication between author and reader.* This demand involves a question of objective determination: How do we know what the author meant if he is dead, anonymous, or not

around to tell us? How can we prove our own conjectures? If the author were around, would he then be any better than another critic? We can imagine, moreover, refurbishing the monkey-at-the-typewriter idea, that a digital computer could put together a sonnet with aesthetic effect from a random set of words. Where would the communication be in this instance?

These questions have been muddled by kinds of demands that no analysis could satisfy. How do we know what the authors of the United States *Constitution* meant? Are they around to tell us? All writings of all description would eventually be duplicated by that machine, including those yet to be written. Are they also acts of communication? If I ask a child to produce all combinations of the letters A, C, T, then he will soon produce the word CAT without communicating any meaning. The judgment that any reference or effect is a communication from another is a probability judgment based upon his experience, with its "truth" only probable to a greater or lesser degree. We have already considered some instances of what could be regarded as evidence of communication.

I would argue that communication is not an active process, in which an author stamps an impress upon the mind of the reader, but a passive one, insofar as the reader and writer are related, in which the reader regards the work according to norms which he shares with the author and with others, and makes his judgments accordingly. The author does not "give over" his meanings and effects, but shapes them in language from potentialities discovered from common experience. The reader's reaction, if "true," is not "identical"—whatever that means—but isomorphic, the individual creation of a system of corresponding internal relations. Such correspondences extend from relations between denotations, in which there is an explicitly conscious meaning, to relations involving tone and style and nuance, which may be wholly or partly unconscious.

6. *It should relate its terms and concepts to a theory of value.* Here, we may say, is the stick with which skeptics are going to beat pretenders. Despite the difficulties, the question of value appears to be an inseparable part of our aesthetic questioning. The "understanding" of a poem involves some kind of feeling, attitude, or stance which ought to be considered part of the aesthetic object.

The empirical analysis of value on the basis of explicit assertions of value nevertheless appears to be impossible. The attempt to do so I have characterized as the "Value Fallacy," intended to be parallel to Wimsatt's and Beardsley's "Intentional Fallacy." It is simply this: The valuing act cannot possibly be characterized adequately by explicit assertions of value because valuing is a complex psychological process of conscious and unconscious forces. "I like *Moby Dick*" and "I find *Moby Dick* a bore" are conscious expressions resulting from complicated mental states and do not necessarily reflect the network of relations which prompted them. They are merely the visible part of the iceberg. To know the grounds of the valuing act, in a psychological sense, is to have a grasp of the dynamism which sponsors it. Each valuing act occurs in an individual context with strands derived from personal experience, most of which have little to do with the aesthetic object.

The hopeful answer to this overwhelming question is that an adequate description of a poem may be in itself a representation of the valuing act which objectively belongs to the poem. I am urging a "contextual" theory in which valuing is regarded as a process, and not a mental state, of feeling-and-knowing, which is necessarily included in a description of form. Aesthetic value would be isolated from other kinds of value. We value literature for many reasons, moral, social, and personal; the little homily which inspires us is undeniably valuable to us, whatever the literary critic may think of it. Such values are no doubt the more important determinants of how and what we read, and I do not mean to imply that they are less important or less meaningful because they cannot be objectively related to the aesthetic object. The analysis of *valuing*, furthermore, is not an analysis of *value*; ultimately, there must be an appeal to conscious reports of value in order to connect a description of a psychological process to the concept of valuing.

7. *It should offer a means of integrating different levels of form.* The failure of literary theory to develop functional terms and concepts stands visible in the chasm between "style" or "texture" and the whole structure. Some works are seen to be immediately dependent upon the exact nature of the language in which they are cast, in which the style may be said to cast the reality in which the whole is possible, as in most poetry and in such novels as *Mrs. Dalloway*; at the other end of the scale are works that are almost (but never completely) independent of texture, in which the plot, as a unified conception, meets the Aristotelian requirement of a powerful effect in the mere telling: "Do you remember the story in which . . . ?" We cannot imagine that "Sailing to Byzantium" could be the same poem if its choice of words were changed, whereas *Crime and Punishment* can convey essentially the same effect in different words (as it does between two translations) as long as a certain kind of correspondence holds between the assertions which make it up. Other forms are even less dependent upon the exact correspondence of assertion to assertion and may be more freely generalized, as may be done with a fairy tale, but which still require some basic relations to preserve their nature—the story must be told in a certain order, certain details are essential, etc. How can one express the relationship between these levels of form?

8. *It should be able to account for the pertinence of a wide variety of approaches to literature.* In *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic criticism, between commentary about the history and production of a literary work and commentary about the structure of works individually or collectively. In their view the test of relevance of extrinsic criticism, if it is to be regarded as literary criticism, is its contribution to a knowledge of literary structure.

Extrinsic approaches have a hazy, ill-defined relation to the intrinsic study of form because we have not as yet clearly defined what we are studying and how it may be described. The cognitive acts of which a literary form consists depend upon external references. When Elinor Wylie begins a sonnet with the line "Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones," how relevant is it to know that the poem was written at a time when *Puritan* had strong negative connotations in popular use? Can we formalize the test of

relevance of extrinsic criticism so that we might better assess the use of such approaches?

9. *It should be able to distinguish between what is literature and what is not.* This is a corollary to the first demand that a theory should be able to define the mode of existence of a poem. We may define literature in any way we wish—as works having observable characteristics, or as having certain purposes, or by some deductive principle, or as a specific collection of works, or as works having observable characteristics, or as having certain purposes, or by some deductive principle, or as a specific collection of works, or as works having more than a certain minimum value. A glance through anthologies indicates that letters, essays, historical writings, even some technical works, have been so classified. The question is not where, but how, we draw the line.

The most useful definition will be based upon discovered functions, not upon discrete characteristics. It will attempt to find ways in which what has historically, and in common sense, been called literature, works in contrast to non-literature. It will make sense of the Aristotelian view that “poetry is a more philosophical and higher thing than history” by analysis of the kinds of operations that separate literature from other kinds of discourse.

These demands on a theory, and one might easily find more of them, are considerable, and it should be clear that no present theory comes close to meeting them. I trust that a “philosophy of art” is implicit in them, one which reaffirms the power of man’s reason in dealing with his own activities. Literature is a common and public human enterprise; everyday people read and understand. Theory is the business of describing as best we can the relations involved in that activity. Those who emphasize the mystery and ineffability of literature fail to understand the role of a theory. The inner nature of all things—of trees, stones, or stars—is unknowable to our limited minds; but we may, in various degrees, observe the relations holding between these unknowns. I am against eclecticism, against dead-end conceptions which block all inquiry before it starts. We need a multiplicity of theories with responsible and ordered generalizations, theories after the fact of literature, not before it. And that fact is slowly discovered by a reader in his armchair.



The Inheritance

● H. E. Francis

"There ought to be a law against such bells! Think of the people who live right next to the church."

The two old men nodded in agreement, though they listened meditatively to the sound. Familiar notes. For at eight every morning and again at seven every evening the church bells struck — sad hymns, haunts from another world, notes that seemed to blow inevitably from the sea, in the wind that swept eternally over the flat land. At such moments, trembling the leaves, even the wind was like someone behind them or, pressing the grass, like the passage of feet they could not see.

"Yah, Matt," Ansel said, already lost in memory, and Peter nodded (he almost never spoke, and then only in a hard-to-understand broken English that was mostly Russian).

Every day in fine weather, the three sat under the apple tree, Matt in the great armchair with a solid bottom hammered together by himself, and Peter and Ansel in folding chairs they kept, in rainy weather, in a shed that was once a chicken coop — when Ansel's parents were alive. Early in the morning, before anyone in the neighborhood was up, they were sitting there. The first thing (when the store opened) they bought beer, as if it were breakfast food. And anytime, day or night, they had bottles in hand. Sometimes friends from the oyster boats bought them quantities of beer or whiskey, and Ansel would get out his accordion and for long hours into the night

the laughter and music would go on. For Ansel, the old house — patched but leaking, untouched by a woman's hands, with its bleached, greasy walls and its dank, rancid smell of old clothes, seldom-changed linens, and moth-shred furniture — would light up, all the windows an orange joy. And the shed Peter lived in again became a tool shed, and the two little shacks were chicken coops, the garden a kaleidoscope of dazzling colors under the old light rigged by his Papa, and the trees and shrubs (he could in actuality smell now) — all this Ansel saw in a vast spread of lawn like then, and Mama was sitting under the tree, and people were dancing . . .

But that was before the coming of Peter, before Matt. And the light that struck now was only the falling sun, catching the west wall, showing the falling eavesdrop, the peeling paint, the cracking bricks in the chimney. And the sound was the church bells, "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Stretching it out, slow. The sound struck the old scene dead.

Now in Ansel's father's place sat Peter, a little old man, sixty-five, who lived in the one-room chicken coop, with a cot, a lamp, a chair, who gave Ansel six dollars each time he received his security check. And in the house, keeping house for Ansel, who worked at the graveyard, Matt lived, sleeping now in Mama's bed, a big man with a stomach like a seven-months'-gone woman, who had no money, no family, who was

not old enough (fifty-two) for old-age security, but who was already crippled in his mind that could not see farther than one task at a time, and who had a rupture that had left him not much good for any kind of hard work.

So, though it was Ansel's own old-age check (he was seventy-one now) that held the house together, the three men nevertheless lived independent in action, Matt keeping house, Peter paying his own way, and Ansel accepting for company this family which in his sentimental heart he could find in no other way. In gratitude for Matt's long company, he made a will, leaving Matt the house and land for life.

"Got to go," Ansel said, limping, already feeling the church bells pall on him, slowing the pulse in him. And to think — he had begun this day with a great leap in him that at last, after ten days in the hospital with a bad foot, he would go back to work despite the clumsy drag. But once on the bicycle, riding down the street, with the dogs barking and the morning sun already a hot streak, he laughed. "See you," he called to Peter and Matt, sitting under the tree with their beer.

A half-hour later he steered into the yard, thrust the bicycle down in anger, and stalked silently into the house. Matt found him in the living room, staring into the blank face of the unpaid-for TV, muttering over and over obscenities he spoke only when in a drunken stupor.

Matt touched him. "Eh! What's the matter?"

Ansel's eyes were red with teary anger.

"That son-of-a-bitching Sam Webb! He got a boy, a young boy that he don't let go now I'm well. That kid's got my job to keep, not just till I'm

coming back, but for good, that son-of-a-bitching Sam, I'll fix him!"

"He can't do that, Ansel. That ain't right."

"Damtright it ain't right, but he done it, he's going to keep it that way too; he ain't changing, that money-grabbing bastard!" After fourteen years riding back and forth, cutting, mowing, trimming, digging graves! To sit now, with Peter and Matt; to sit, with no money, just the old-age pension, and the taxes coming each year, and the unpaid TV, and gas and electric and water — from an old-age pension.

But there was nothing to say. Sam Webb ruled the cemetery and had the Cemetery Association in the palm of his hand, and Ansel knew that.

"The dirty bastard!" he said. In the doorway Peter nodded, mute.

Matt and Peter were about to leave when they heard the miaow. Instantly Ansel's face lighted, his eyes crinkled. "By damn, I forgot!" Out of his left jacket pocket he drew a tiny mottled kitten. "Found it at the graveyard," he said, "screaming in a big voice for such a little thing." Peter laughed. The kitten cuddled up close to his neck.

"You feed." Ansel indicated the ice box. "Milk. Bread. Some scraps, maybe."

"There's nothing there for a cat," Matt said. "Have a beer, Ansel. Come outside. It don't do no good to be upset. Only make you aggravated for nothing." But, reminded, Ansel raged. Outside, Matt and Peter could hear him, sometimes striking things, talking loud to himself, a vigorous high-pitched voice that broke now and then into German. They could hear the angry tears in his voice.

After awhile he came out, took his old basket, and went to the store. This time he did not buy beer, dis-

appointing Peter and Matt, but milk, a loaf of bread, and six cans of cat food. "Here, kitty, kitty," he called.

Now Ansel sat with them every day, workless. Like the kitten, he grew fat, his stomach more and more looking like Matt's.

"You sew good," he told Matt. "Maybe you put strips in my old pants, eh?"

"Sure." And Ansel listened while Matt talked, for every day, faithful, Matt read the newspapers, listened to the radio; always he had something to talk about. Now, with Ansel home, he had two people to listen. Sometimes, when they seemed to tire and it was plain Ansel wandered (when anger about the lost job came back, or nostalgia transplanted him from the lonely world he saw through his own eyes) or Peter walked off into his little house, then Matt would ask for help — to arrange the stored stoves or bedsprings people gave them, or maybe from Peter a hair trim, or maybe weed his tomato and eggplant patches.

But Ansel was involved with the kitten. He would have it in his lap. "I can't move it now, poor thing," he'd say. Or in the evening, before bed: "We got milk for Little One?" Then he would trudge at once to the store for milk, checking for other items. He bought a rubber mouse, a rattle like a baby's, and — for fun — a box of balloons to blow and bounce for Little One to break.

"You using tax money?" Matt asked. "January comes fast — remember, nobody's working."

"Yah," Ansel said. His eyes bleaked, seeing the cold, and then indoors, the perpetual gray sky, and the leafless trees, long dead arms in the barren ground. And no job. If it hadn't been for the kitten, he'd have thought more and more about it. As

it was, he grew tired and weak, fat. He sat longer and stared more distantly, thinking he heard people talking to him — not like when he talked over the graves, but now they called to him. He liked it. Matt said it was only the wind he heard. But he knew better. They were familiar talk. He was convinced people never died; they were waiting for you somewhere, and it was all just in finding the place after awhile.

"You never listen to nobody," Matt said.

"What?" Ansel set the kitten down.

"See what I mean! You never listen. I talk all the time and you don't hear."

"I guess that's right."

Matt scooped the pancakes out and dropped the skillet with an angry bang on the stove.

"Just coffee," Ansel said, "I'm not hungry." Before the kitchen window, he felt the September sun sink pleasantly into him. "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty—"

Cleaning the house, Matt cursed the cat hairs in the bed, for Ansel took the kitten to bed, let him crawl under the covers to keep his old feet warm. And with Ansel's hearing not so good as it was, sometimes when the cat cried he did not hear it, or napping, he didn't hear it; so he could not let it out. There were little puddles or brown lumps where the cat had relieved itself. After a while, the cat grew lazy, spoiled, and no longer tried to get out.

But, worse, Ansel no longer heard Matt either. Maybe he was thinking of the job he lost, or of the past, or of something he saw outside, where people passed now and then. But certainly he never listened to Matt.

"I just keep talking to myself, is that it? Well, is it? Might as well be dead as not have anybody to talk

to." Matt's rage sometimes reached such bellowing heights that Peter stayed outside in his coop, coming in only once in a while to watch the polka program that reminded him of old times, making him forget now, and Matt, and his little life that the coop held around him.

So it was one Monday night with Peter and Ansel stomping to a polka, happy and laughing, far gone in the past, that Matt had his chance. He took the empty beer cans that were on the floor by the TV and carried them to the kitchen. He put the cans in a bag and he took Little One and went out back to throw the cans away. Then he squeezed Little One, bending its neck until he heard it snap and felt her limp in his hands. He put the kitten in a bag and dropped it in the sewage hole across the street.

That night Ansel fell asleep in the chair and slept there all night. In the morning he woke Matt. "I look everywhere for Little One. You seen her?"

"Only in my sleep," Matt said, joking, but Ansel did not laugh. He walked through the whole neighborhood, calling, off and on all day long, "Here, Little One—!" But Little One did not come. "I don't understand; she never goes, she sticks close by."

Ansel sat in the chair, staring out the window, occasionally grunting about Little One. Still he did not hear Matt at all, and Matt growled angrily, "I cook, clean, wash. I do everything for you and you don't even listen." Outside in his shack, Peter thanked God he lived alone, paid, and had no responsibilities in the house.

Ansel's luck held, constant and bad. In October, when the cold winds came, he caught cold. By November

he was gray and ashen, a walking November sky. He had a damp look and Matt grew worried. To top it off, Ansel's eyes seemed to follow him everywhere, clinging to his movements, envying; so Matt tried not to move so much, just to talk. Even then, Ansel's eyes, with a placidity Matt had never seen in them before, lingered on Matt's lips as if reading them; so Matt ground the words dead in his mouth before they could come out. It was a great trial. A test of endurance. Silence. Each day Ansel grew weaker. He had taken to milk now. It was all he wanted, muttering, "It gives strength."

"But not to us old men," Matt said. "I read it gives hardening of the arteries."

But Ansel was stubborn.

One morning in December Ansel could not get out of bed. He rolled over, groaned, looked more gray than ever. Only his eyes were bright, shining, like a cat's in the dark.

"Nothing to keep me warm," Ansel said, twitching his toes beneath the blankets.

"The house is warm, I got the stove up high," Matt said.

"My feet are cold." Ansel stared at him with eyes that did not really say anything at all. They looked big, empty, and Matt did not like looking into them. Lazarus, he thought. Lazarus.

Matt called in Doctor Benz, but he could do nothing. "You have to wait," the doctor told him. Then it hit Matt that Ansel was really dying; he would be alone in this house, Peter would never come in . . .

"But what's the cause?" he asked the doctor.

"I can't say. Some people just die. Old age. Tired. Who knows? But no disease here."

"No reason?" Matt blanked; his

whole mind revolted at that. To die with no cause! Impossible.

"Ansel, why're you dying?" he asked. But Ansel simply stared. Now nothing about him except his eyes seemed alive. He lay in that bed, only a rasp for life, reminding Matt with each breath that any minute maybe it would stop; it would be silent, silent forever, with only the sound of himself moving here, with his voice for no one to listen to, an echo in all the rooms, hitting the ceiling . . .

"Peter, Ansel is dying," he said.

"Shhh. He hears."

And Matt lay awake all night now, hollows crept under his eyes; he lost weight, worrying when would Ansel die? When would the house be empty? How long would the desolate wind blow the empty sound? He took to getting up in the middle of the night and huddling near the stove just to feel the heat of this world, but he forgot why he was sitting there until he heard Ansel's breathing getting deeper.

He went to him.

"Ansel," he said, "don't die."

Ansel stared at him, through him.

"Tell me what you see, Ansel. Please tell me."

But Ansel did not say anything. He stared. His eyes looked so healthy in that ashy face. They looked accusing, cold. They would not warm to Matt, as if they were waiting for something behind him. Matt couldn't stand it.

"Ansel, it's losing the cat that killed you?"

Ansel nodded no.

"Ansel—" He took his hand. "It

was me. I killed the cat. I broke its neck and dropped it into the sewer."

For the first time Ansel smiled. And for a long time his eyes moved over Matt's face before he spoke. "No," he whispered. "No. You always good to me. You wouldn't do that. Not you."

"Listen, Ansel. It *was* me. I thought you would listen to me. You wouldn't listen, nobody would, so I killed the cat. See?" He shouted at Ansel's distant mind.

"No . . ." Ansel smiled. His face seemed to erupt suddenly. His mouth pursed, then opened like a cauldron, then settled, its edges twitching. He choked a little, and his chest sank, slowly. Dead.

"Ansel!" Matt called, knowing it was too late. Stillness settled in around him. It was ghostly. He felt it. Where was Ansel, now that his body alone was here? There was a quiet shuffling of feet. He turned around. It was Peter standing there.

"You!" Matt cried. "You!" drawing himself up. "Get out of my house! Stay in your own!"

Peter went out, and Matt slammed the door behind him. He stood by the kitchen table, listening to the wind angry against the house. Distantly he heard Peter's door slam. For an instant he strained, expecting to hear the sound of Ansel's breathing. Then he went into the bedroom. He looked around, alone . . . Then he bent low, hovering over the body a moment, and whispered in Ansel's ear desperately, "What'll I do about the taxes, Ansel — the taxes?"



Man's Love

● B. M. Steigman

St. Nicholas ice skating rink on West Sixty-sixth Street in those days was a good place for a shy young fellow to pick up a girl: he could safely approach one of the giggling, shrieking beginners who wobbled on her skates and was ready to clutch at any nearby man for support. Once she had a grip on him, with both hands perhaps, even a studious City College boy who was fairly firm on his skating legs could feel socially secure and be venturesome from there on.

The more so if he was not alone against possible rebuff. Lewis's classmate Roy Dennis was with him, and Roy would know what to say and do. They watched the counter-clockwise sweep of skaters around the rink for an opening, and then Roy glided over to two girls dressed alike, shrill and teetering and holding on to each other. He signaled Lewis to move up and take one of them while he slid his arm over for deft support of the other. "Not allowed to skate four abreast," he then announced, and there they were, two separate couples going round and round, they two now paired like all those about them.

Conversation was no problem at all. Immediate orders had to be given the girls: bend the knee at each stride, cross the right foot over the left . . . Lewis to his pleasant surprise was unabashed holding the arm of the girl; he felt quite the cavalier as he supported her. When she got tired and they sat down to

rest, he had only to go on telling her about the firm ankles, the rotating shoulders, the upright waist. He was talking to her about the parts of her body, and he found actually he was not in the least embarrassed.

Roy had done as well or probably even better with his partner, and when the session was over, he proposed they have a bite next door at Healy's. Lewis gave him a startled look: the Healy Restaurant of those days was a swanky place; his hand went to his coat pocket to check with his fingers the cash he had. Fortunately the two girls—sisters from the way they looked—stopped at the entrance to the restaurant. Possibly they were concerned about their skating outfits, which were modest enough by the thigh-exposing ice-skating standards of today, but in those days when a woman's dress still swept the streets it was maybe too conspicuous to wear a skirt that barely reached the top of the boots.

Possibly from what Roy's girl said they wanted to spare their escorts: "Coming over, we passed Childs on the corner. The man was making lovely buckwheat cakes in the window." Roy at once led her past Healy's toward Broadway. Her sister silently followed, and Lewis's uneasy fingers emerged from his pocket, and he walked confidently beside her on the outside as an experienced gentleman should.

They found a table for four, but the waitress said hold on, she first had to wipe it clean, couldn't they

see? The boys looked abashed, and they bent over the menus and shifted in their chairs. Roy retrieved their self-possession by remembering the etiquette of formal introduction: he introduced Lewis Maynel, and then Lewis introduced Roy Dennis. The girls suppressed a titter. Roy's girl said, "And this is my sister, Hilda Pelliner, and I'm *her* sister, Selma Pelliner. Pleased to meet you." The boys said, "Pleased to meet you," and all bowed to each other. Roy asked "Miss Pelliner" if she wished to order buckwheat cakes and coffee. Both girls nodded and began to answer at the same time, then broke off and giggled, Selma loud and hearty, Hilda more subdued, or maybe more pinched.

The waitress said, "You going to give your order or ain't you?" Selma began to explain to her how the buckwheat cakes should be done, but was told, "You'll take 'em the way the chef gives 'em to me." Hilda's lips tightened; Selma said, "Pooh!" at the retreating waitress, and then she explained with gusto how buckwheat batter should be mixed and how the pan should be prepared, and Hilda contributed a warning that it would be no good without the right maple syrup and butter sauce. They didn't notice how the boys, by now assertive enough to be disdainful of trivial talk, were leaning back in their chairs and staring at the curlicued pattern of the tin ceiling.

For Roy and Lewis that year were taking the senior year elective course in English literature; and so Roy at last broke in upon the girls' inane gab by asking them if they had read Byron's "Don Juan." Their talk stopped with a jolt. Selma recovered and said no, she hadn't got around to that book yet. Hilda drew away

as if from an annoying intruder. Roy then leaned forward, with head prone with thought like his English professor: "Though Lord Byron's poetry has lost much of its appeal to us now that poets like Masters, Robinson, and Amy Lowell have sprung upon our scene, yet some of his lines still merit consideration. Such as—" He paused a moment, then declaimed: "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart; / 'Tis woman's whole existence." He peered at the girls to see the effect.

After a bewildered and then challenging silence, Selma spoke up: "You don't say! Guess there's going to be more than just love in our lives!" That was just what the boys hoped she would say; now they would have one of those mature, sophisticated discussions pitting the way men are against the way women, on the contrary, are. Lewis could hold his own with Roy: "Because a woman after all is a weaker vessel—the way Tennyson puts it: 'Woman is the lesser man, her passions match'd with mine, / Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—'"

The waitress fortunately was upon them with their buckwheat cakes and coffee, and they ate too hungrily after their skating to pursue the war of the sexes. A benign truce followed. Selma, mopping up her last bite, said, "Good, weren't they! But guess we can do better, can't we, Hilda? You boys must come for a visit sometime and we'll show you."

There was an instant acceptance. Where did they live, was it near by, within walking distance? Not way out in Brooklyn? Selma laughed; they lived in South Norwalk, Connecticut. Hilda nodded to Lewis: "Forty-three miles — make a nice

walk, wouldn't it?" With Hilda's blue eyes turned on him and her cheeks made pink by the hot coffee after the icy rink, Lewis stammered, "Y-yes, a—a very nice walk." Roy loyally lied; they had done lots of hiking; forty-three miles was nothing, just a nice day's walk.

Selma said, "My!" out loud, appreciatively. Hilda, her eyes still critical, asked, "You college boys?"

They both nodded, emphatically. Hilda followed up: "Are you on a college team, on the baseball team?" Lewis reddened. Roy said, "No, that old game, that's passé. The College is planning to introduce hockey. Now that's—something!"

Hilda began: "Is that a team you'll—" But Roy was too quick for her: "Say, what made you come all the way from that small town in Connecticut to skate here?"

"South Norwalk's no small town," Selma said. "Wait till you see."

Hilda said, "We saw pictures of Charlotte." Her bosom rose. ("Charlotte," the glamorous one, was the then pin-up, pirouetting on the tips of her white-shoed skates, her white fur-lined fluffy skirt whirling up almost to her knees.) Lewis boldly half turned to Hilda and said, "Will you—will you be here again?"

Selma considered. "Oh, I guess Mama'll let us come again. Though she said nix to this trip—till we said must we never meet only always those same Norwalk boys." She consulted the porcelain watch attached to a fleur-de-lis on her shirtwaist. "Guess we'd better start off or we'll miss our train."

Lewis offered to help Hilda on with her coat and she did not object. She was the prettier of the two, he felt; Selma, slightly taller, was handsome in a way, but Hilda's features

were sort of aloof, aristocratic. Roy and Selma led the way out, Roy with his hand on Selma's elbow. Lewis moved his hand toward Hilda's arm, but he didn't actually touch it.

When the trolley to Grand Central drew up, they exchanged addresses and Selma said, as she climbed aboard, "Come real soon and we'll bake you some scrumptious muffins and cookies. Our turn to treat." Hilda's eyes smote Lewis as she faced him from the trolley platform.

Roy and Lewis walked excitedly up Broadway. They were aware of one thing: they were liked by the girls, and that was a heady revelation. There was so much now for them to talk about, to appraise, to clarify.

"Women," Roy said, "are still concerned with man's primitive needs. They are still preoccupied with the preparation of food—buckwheat cakes, muffins—ha!"

"They expect physical skill of a man," Lewis said. "She—they expected us to be on the basketball team."

"I told them we would have nothing to do with that sort of primitive . . ." They walked on more rapidly. Last night's basketball victory by City College had been given columns of space in the newspapers; some of the players had their names in print three or four times or more. Only once had Roy Dennis and Lewis Maynel seen their names in print—in small print—in the College *Campus*, both of them for honorary mention in a poetry contest.

"Evolution is still on a physical basis. Woman selects her mate for his bodily strength."

"Eventually we'll have spiritual evolution."

"Then men will be chosen by women for their minds only."

"But that's still far off," Lewis said. Then, reflectively: "It was Hilda who asked us if we were college men. She seemed to understand—"

"No, it was Selma!" Roy interrupted. "Hilda was just after us about being on a team. And Selma admired our skating, and she said she wants to see us soon. She has a warm heart."

"She's just interested in baking pancakes! Hilda wants to get to be a skater like Charlotte. She's evidently artistic. And she's better looking than Selma."

Hilda was an inch or so shorter than Selma. Roy got back at him: "No short woman can be goodlooking. 'Give me mistresses with long, smooth marbly limbs.' It was Browning's Renaissance man said that. I agree with Browning. And I agree with Byron: 'I hate a dumpy woman.' I'll go by Byron's taste in women any day."

"She's not dumpy!" Lewis sounded as if he might fight if necessary. "She's better looking than Selma. Her eyes, her expression, and her voice —ever soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.' " Lewis's quotation triumphed over Roy's.

"Bah! She just didn't have anything to say. Selma's intelligent, she can converse freely."

"Yes, about buckwheat cakes."

"No. You heard what she said; there's going to be more than just love in their lives."

They pondered that. Woman, modern enlightened woman, had emerged from her nineteenth century dependent state. The Pelliner girls were evidently planning careers for themselves. Their concern with baking was just a gracious interest in domestic life as well. Roy and Lewis agreed that Selma and Hilda Pelliner

were remarkable.

They sent the girls picture postcards of the skating rink, and in return each got a postcard view of the handsome new South Norwalk library. (Was that to tease them for being bookish, or to compliment them for being scholars?) On Lewis's card Hilda had written, "Just a nice walk to this place." To Lewis it was significant: she wanted him to be sure to come, and she was encouraging him to be athletic; she believed in a fine body for a fine mind. Lewis felt she might be destined to be a great influence in his life.

Definitely both boys felt committed to walk the whole way or be shamed as weaklings. They decided to do it the very first day of the mid-term recess, and each sent the happy news.

They were on the road by six o'clock that morning. The day was bright and brisk, and they set out on the largely unpaved Boston Post Road with high hearts and long strides. They kept their pace until they got to Mount Vernon, where they examined their road map and saw how unbelievably small a part of the way they had gone. They marched on, still strong of purpose. Their steps were slower, heavier by the time they entered Larchmont. When they got to Mamaroneck, they dragged themselves to a yellow diner on wheels, more for rest than food. It was now almost midday, and more than half the distance still lay before them.

Until now the Boston Post Road had at least been fairly dry; but it evidently had rained thereabouts the night before so that the dirt part of the road was muddy. The boys sank ankle deep in places. That bothered them at first but then gave renewed

zest to their adventure, and they splashed full speed ahead and damn the puddles. They were on high romance bent, in the pattern of Leander buffeting the Hellespont, of Siegfried charging to attain unto Brunhild. Some miles further on, their shoes had a chance to dry out and get caked and then incrusted with layers of dust so that they looked gratifyingly battered. At Port Chester their knees buckled. They were opposite a saloon. No matter; they could not go on. They hobbled in, the first time they had ever passed through swinging doors. They knew that it was acceptable for them to order celery tonic: the bartender might think them mollycoddles, but then let him. They lifted their glasses; beyond Port Chester lay Connecticut, and it was somehow appropriate to lift glasses to the crossing of the border. They avoided the bartender's eyes.

They managed to keep going, however painfully, till they got to Greenwich. After that, their collapsing legs protested at every step. In Stamford they sank down on a bench at the trolley stop and mutely questioned each other; they still had twelve miles more to go. The Connecticut part of the road, to be sure, seemed much better, still . . . and they needn't tell . . . They kept honor bright, ignored the oncoming South Norwalk trolley, and plodded on. A mile out a horse-drawn truck passed them, slowed up, then stopped. The boys staggered toward it. The driver yelled, "Hey! Hop on." They managed in turn to get up on the hub of the wheel and then up on the rim, then flopped down on the feed sacks inside.

When they were prodded up by the driver, they were at the West

Street Crescent in the center of South Norwalk. Close by, they recognized at once from the postcards the classic facade of the new library with its pediment, pilasters, and fluted pillars. They were relieved to be told they were only a few blocks away from the Pelliner address on North Main Street. They found their legs again; they pictured the girl's exciting welcome and admiration of their achievement. (Hilda's especially, Lewis was sure; her eyes would now smile on him.)

Somebody hailed them from the remodeled three-story home on Washington Street of *The South Norwalk Sentinel*: "Hello there, boys! You look as if you've come a long way."

James Golden, editor and proprietor of *The Sentinel*, was coming down the iron steps. He pointed to their shoes and wagged his head in a show of sympathy. They said, all the way from New York. Mr. Golden looked, or managed to look, astonished.

"You walked all the way?"

"Well—just about."

It was a spontaneous answer. In retrospect they felt it was just about the right answer.

Mr. Golden did not challenge them. "Where did you walk into that?" He pointed again to the mud on their shoes.

They told him around Mamaroneck, Port Chester. At that Mr. Golden's eyebrows rose. He went back up the steps and opened the door. "Come in, boys," he said. "Tell me about it."

The Connecticut newspapers just then were giving the nearby New York towns rough treatment for keeping their part of the Boston Post Road in a disgraceful condition. *The Sentinel* delighted in this baiting

of the big New York State bully. Mr. Golden's sparkling questions to them from his rolltop desk brought the right response from Roy and Lewis, who were relieved to feel that their state of collapse was caused not by lack of stamina but by impossible roads.

They saw that their interviewer was taking notes. Faintly, incredulously, they asked: "You're going to write this up?" They held their breath.

"Wouldn't you call it news when a couple of boys like you can tackle those roads and actually get through to Connecticut?" He nodded and held up his hand by way of good-by salute. At the door the boys stopped and looked back at him: "Will it appear—will the article be published soon—in tomorrow's paper?"

"That's the time and place for important news like this, isn't it?"

They turned up North Main Street, their jubilant minds triumphing over their weary bodies. They must announce that to the girls—to Selma, to Hilda . . . They must hurry, it was now past seven o'clock, and they had written the girls that they would arrive easily before three in the afternoon.

The Pelliner house was impressively handsome, a worthy mecca for a pilgrimage such as theirs, and the lights in the windows cast a welcoming glow over the wide steps and stately veranda. The boys hesitated and wondered for a moment about their grubby appearance—those awful looking shoes. But no, women do prefer manly men, men with mud on their feet. They gave the doorbell an energetic ring, and they were keyed to give the girls a lively greeting. The look on the maid who opened the door was ominous, pre-

lude to what they saw when they faced Selma and Hilda Pelliner in the living room.

Said Selma: "So these are the athletes who were to get here at three o'clock! Guess you had trouble trying to find such a small town, didn't you?"

Hilda, pointing to Lewis's shoes: "Got stuck in the mud, did you?"

The girls were in formidable puff-sleeved and bustled dresses, their pompadoured heads high over their boned lace collars. Roy sulked; Lewis's face pleaded with Hilda. Then the girls' mother, evidently forewarned by the maid, flung open the living room door and made her entry like an outraged Juno, goddess guardian against the desecration of the hearth.

"So!" Mrs. Pelliner began. But her pronouncement stifled in her wrath: "Our Norwalk boys not good enough—Those you bring from New York—You and your Charlotte with skirts up to her knees for the kind of boys—!" As she swept out: "Never again, I tell you that!"

There was a moment of mortified silence. Selma forced a smile and tried to be reassuring: "Don't mind her." Hilda's slender, impatient hand waved her mother's intrusion aside; and there was balm for Lewis in her blue eyes. Selma said, "Guess you must be starved. You better come down with us to the kitchen." She led the way. Hilda couldn't resist one more dig: "If they're able to hike all the way down." But Lewis felt she had a faint, oh adorable, smile for him.

The boys followed them downstairs into a kitchen big as a front parlor, and their eyes fixed on a table bearing generous left-overs of a feast: a platter of remains of

chicken, a ham only partly cut to the bone, a heap of potato salad and pickles, and especially—as if saved against their arrival—a pile of those vaunted muffins and cookies; and beside these a row of bottles of Moxie and root beer. “That’s just what’s left of the supper we had,” Selma said. “And got ready specially for you!”

“Well, don’t just stand there,” Hilda said. “Don’t you know what to do?”

The boys ate, their appetite now on the loose, and the girls kept filling their plates, Selma helping Roy, Hilda helping Lewis, nodding smugly when the boys mumbled their appreciation between their enormous bites. It made them feel closely drawn to each other, the more so since the four of them were huddled, as it were, in the basement from the stormy upstairs.

There was still the big news to be told, and that was touched off by Hilda, who seemed to make it more an exclamation than a question: “You really walked all the way from New York—forty-three miles!”

“Well—just about.”

They hastened to tell of their visit to *The Sentinel*, and there would be an article about them, a whole article, mind you, and it would appear in tomorrow’s paper! You must read . . .

They had to miss hearing the impression this made, for a distinctly challenging sound came from the top of the stairs that made them all get up. Selma and Hilda said softly: “We’ll come to New York; we’ll let you know soon, unless—oh, Mama’ll let us, once she gets over . . . Now you’d better catch the 9:16 train. You know where the station is, just down the street. We’ll take you there, it’s still early.”

When the girls slipped on their wide ostrich-plumed hats and veils and their feather boas around their necks, they looked—the boys agreed—“enchanting.” They walked, turning into Washington Street, two intimate couples, Roy with Selma’s arm in his, Lewis with Hilda’s arm in his. They had to make their talk worthy of these glorious girls: they talked about man’s strength and woman’s elevated twentieth century place beside him, about the womanly need for the masculine arm — one might say the oak to which the womanly woman like a vine naturally . . .

Selma said they had better think about the 9:16 train. Lewis, his throat tightened, asked Hilda, “Isn’t there a later train?”

“Not till the half-past twelve express!” Lewis was sure there was sympathy, even regret, in Hilda’s voice. Couldn’t they be together till then? It would be a three-hour reprieve from the pain of parting.

He was about to implore Hilda. But they had reached *The Sentinel* building, from which came the pounding clatter of its printing press. Roy and Lewis both stopped; their eyes met; they let the girls’ arms hang limp.

Roy thought fast. “It’s *we* really who should be escorting *you*. It’s the man’s place. We’ll escort you home, if you permit.”

On the Pelliner veranda, now in sheltering darkness, their good-by handshakes were prolonged. Lewis held on to Hilda’s hand, blissfully reassured when there was no word or motion of protest. Then the Congregational Church above and St. Joseph’s below sounded a dissonant antiphonal nine o’clock. “We’d better be off,” Roy’s voice came

through; and again: "Come on, Lewis! Getting late!"

He kept waving back at Hilda till they were out of sight; then, Roy leading, they made straight for *The Sentinel* building. They stood on the iron steps a moment, then they went up and knocked on the door; they knocked again, louder; then they banged. A man in gartered shirt-sleeves opened and glared at them. They explained, and they asked could they have a copy of the paper. The man swore, spat, said not till after midnight, what's the excitement? They looked at each other. With one accord they said they'd wait—could they have a copy before the twelve-thirty train? The man scowled, but he said cripes, if they had 'em that bad, all right.

The library building was close by, so familiar to them from the girls' postcards. They would pass the three hours on its deserted steps. They would discuss, from their direct experience, the characteristics of woman, the modern woman. They squatted between the two Ionic columns, they stretched their legs; before they could summon a thought they crumbled, swayed, and fell asleep. They remained fast asleep, motionless, when an hour later the church duet struck ten; they stirred for a moment in their sleep when it struck eleven. When twelve o'clock sounded, they sat up with a start. It took them a moment to find themselves; then they were off to get *The Sentinel*.

The man had a glass mug of beer in his hand and he was in a better mood. They asked could they have an extra copy, and when that was granted they wangled two — no, please make it three — extra copies for each of them. They grabbed them

and scanned the first page—they had hoped it might be there: after all, the man who interviewed them did say their expedition was important news. They turned to the next page and the next and the next, with a pang in the stomach as each page in turn seemed to have shut them out. And then the leap of the heart when they saw it:

BOYS BRAVE NEW YORK ROADS

Succeed in Reaching Connecticut

There was half a column of it, and their full names, Roy Dannis and Lewis Maynel, were printed in full in the second paragraph and then referred to again near the bottom. They hurried, flushed, to catch the train.

At the station there was time to read all of the article—to ponder it with some misgivings: it was mostly about past feuds between the New York and Connecticut road authorities, the "grueling experience" of the "two college boys" serving largely to point up some heavy-handed sarcasms. Settled in the train, they reread it; they peeped into their other copies of the paper just to be sure it was there.

They sighed with content and discontent. After all, they did have a write-up, as big as the basketball team got. They would send a clipping each to the girls for their mother to see and bitterly repent her shameful treatment of them. "We should let *The Campus* have a copy. There's just too much fuss about teams and sporting varsity sweaters instead of physical development for its own sake. Maybe when they read this, they'll organize college hiking."

Roy stretched his legs and leaned back: "Why shouldn't the college let you earn your varsity letters for

a sport like that?"

Lewis's yawn stifled: "Gosh! What would Hilda — what would the girls—!"

Their eyes drooped upon *The Sentinel* spread open on their laps as they reflected further: "Too much in this about the Empire State's roads and finances getting mired and paved only with good intentions and all that. Just a few lines about us."

"Maybe we've started something—better roads for New York State."

"Maybe we should send a clipping to the Governor. He might take ac-

tion—just because of our hike!"

Roy was slumping in his seat: "Trouble with college—don't take interest in public affairs."

Lewis mumbled: "Hilda'd see—influence in community, not just literature—"

Their projects were drowned in the persistent rhythmic printing-press rattling beneath them. They had to wait for that to stop, but by then the train had stopped at Grand Central, and the conductor was tapping them on the shoulder.

The Eagle

● Gerald Barrax

The unbound eagle soared
to crags and heights
in the high thin air
where the yellow wind blew
high over the waving grains
and the blue cold mountains
he glided the air up
and higher into a hazy speck
until mankind and eagle
fell
at groundzero.

The eagle descends from heights and crags
above the blackened plains and leveled cities,
driving into the fouled, heavy air until dragged
to earth, and drags the earth, a carrion
bird lagging his death by starving time,
screaming,
protesting to nothing but the heavy, violet air.

Contributors

MARTIN McMURTRY, a member of the Society of Mary, is a Brother teaching at Central Catholic High School, San Antonio, Texas. WILLIAM SAYRES writes from North Chatham, N.Y.: "It was very pleasant to find your letter of acceptance and check for my story . . . Though I've had over sixty things (including a novel) published, this is the first time I've received a check right along with the acceptance letter . . . I'm not at all mercenary about writing, since I write because I love writing and *have* to write, but your check was a most welcome surprise." JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON, on the English staff at Louisiana State University, had a poem in the November 1961 issue of **four quarters**. BERTRAM JESSUP, professor of philosophy at the University of Oregon, has written: "What I am sending you is an adapted excerpt from a large work in which I am engaged, *Aesthetic and Other Human Values*. My direction in dealing with fine art will be that fine art and its place in life is an extension through specialization of what already goes on in the form of what I call 'common life art,' or 'art in common life.'" BRUCE OLSEN, member of the Department of English, University of Pennsylvania, states that "the request to express myself on a philosophy of art proved irresistible"; it finally led to his article in this issue. H. E. FRANCIS is at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, where he conducts a short story workshop in the day college and the evening division's adult classes. B. M. STEIGMAN lives in New York City in a well-appointed apartment overlooking Central Park. GERALD BARRAX, student at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, is working under the tutelage of Samuel Hazo, whose poems have frequently appeared in **four quarters**.

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